so, there is reduction in infant mortality and maternal mortality. I would like to say that in 3 years, nearly one crore women have accessed this Programme and benefited from this Programme. So, this is something which is rolling out in the entire country. A silent revolution is happening. I would like the hon. Members to please point out the deficiencies. Please point out the deficiencies in your constituencies, in your States and districts. We will take cognisance of them. We will request the States to take it up. In Rajasthan alone, during the last four years, they have given, approximately, Rs. 1,800 crores to one scheme alone under the National Rural Health Mission. Today you visit any part in Rajasthan, you will see health infrastructure. Earlier and today; just compare the last three years and today's performance; you will see that there has been a complete transformation in infrastructure, facilities, manpower, and ANMs. There has been a sea change. It mostly focuses on Northern States.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

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WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Import of pulses

*101. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has recently decided to import pulses from foreign countries to augment domestic availability and to check its rising prices;

(b) if so, the details thereof and under what terms and conditions such imports of pulses have been allowed;

(c) whether the indigenous production of pulses has fallen in the past few years;

(d) if so, the factors responsible for fall in production of pulses; and

(e) the steps taken by Government to encourage production of pulses in the country and to avoid its import?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to augment the domestic availability of pulses and stabilize its prices, Government permitted PSUs namely STC, PEC Ltd., MMTC and NAFED to import pulses during 2007-08 and 2008-09 with reimbursement of losses up to 15% of landed cost and service charge of 1.2% of CIF value. The PSUs are to dispose the pulses in a transparent manner as approved by their respective managements. PSUs and NAFED imported 13.2 lakh tonnes and 3.5 lakh tonnes of pulses in 2007-08 and 2008-09 (up to 16.10.08) respectively.

(c) No, Sir. Pulses production in the country increased from 13.13 million tonnes in 2004-05 to 14.19 million tonnes in 2006-07. There has been a record production of 15.11 million tonnes of pulses during 2007-08 (Fourth Advance Estimate).

(d) In view of (c) above, does not arise.

(e) Government is implementing several Central Sector/Centrally Sponsored Schemes for enhancement of agriculture production including pulses. Some of the major initiatives and steps taken by the Government are:-

1. **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**: The National Development Council on 29th May, 2007 adopted a resolution to launch a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, Food Security Mission. NFSM has been launched in 312 identified districts of 17 States from Rabi 2007-08. The NFSM, *inter alia,* covers Pulses. Its target is to increase production of pulses by 2 million tonnes by the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

2. **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana**: A new State Plan scheme of Additional Central Assistance(ACA) for Agriculture & Allied Sectors namely Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) has been launched during 2007-08 with an outlay of Rs.25,000 crore for the 11th Five Year Plan to enhance investment in agriculture and allied sectors. The broad objective of the scheme is to incentivize the States to increase public investment to achieve 4% growth rate in Agriculture and allied sectors in the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

3. **Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oilpalm & Maize (ISOPOM)**: ISOPOM is implemented in 14 major Oilseeds and Pulses growing States *viz;* Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Under ISOPOM, assistance is given to the States to encourage farmers to grow pulses on a large scale.

4. **Increased Budgetary Outlay**: The actual expenditure on Agriculture and allied sector was Rs 22,000 crore in the Tenth Plan. Government has increased the Central Government outlay on Agriculture and allied sector to Rs 87,000 crore in Eleventh Plan.

Absorption of porters/coolies as fourth grade employees

*106. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided that porters/coolies would be absorbed as fourth grade employees;

(b) if so, whether they would be given the scale of fourth grade employees; and

(c) if so, whether passengers would not be required to pay porters/coolies?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Licensed Porters/coolies after being appointed as Gangmen do not perform the job of licensed porters/coolies. Instead, they would be performing duties attached to the post of Gangman. Handling of passenger's luggage is done by licensed porters/coolies on the stations and they will have to be paid by the passengers as per the notified rates.

Deficit in rainfall in certain areas

*107. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Peninsular India was facing deficit in rainfall from South-West Monsoon during the period 15 June – 15 July;

(b) if so, whether there are areas where deficit has been more than 40 per cent and whether in those areas there has been no sowing or the seeds sown have not germinated;